

June 16, 2004

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Robert Gilstein, Town Planner
RE: **Town Center Zone – Major Goals**

Once the new Clements Market became a success, it became obvious that the nearby commercial area would rapidly be developed. We could either stand by and watch typical strip commercial be developed, or try to take some control over it. The Town Center Committee held a series of public workshops, including two with nationally recognized experts in the field, to find out what people want and how to get there. Major conclusions are:

1. People would like Portsmouth to have a town center.
2. Traffic must be slowed down considerably, so that people can feel comfortable walking on the sidewalks. We are speaking with RIDOT about roundabouts and other methods of traffic calming. That's why you see all the traffic counters on the road this week.
3. We need sidewalks to walk on.
4. Development should be somewhat dense, so that people can park in one place and walk from store to store.
5. To make it easier to walk from store to store, buildings should be set near the street with parking in back or on the side.
6. We need to prevent commercial uses that don't belong in a town center – those that take up a lot of space (like used car lots), and those that do not generate much potential foot traffic.
7. We should allow some dense residential development in a PUD setting to help create foot traffic.
8. We need to have maximum control over developments that are permitted, so we can get parts that contribute to the whole.
9. We recognize the major difficulties of traffic control and drainage. Even if it agrees to do something, it will be years before DOT will actual construct any changes. We feel that the drainage problems can be solved if the property becomes worth enough to finance an expensive solution. While awaiting solutions, we could lose the area to strip development.

The proposed new "Town Center Zone":

- a) Creates a definition to go in Article II of zoning.
- b) Defines existing commercial lots as a new zoning district by plat-lot in Article III.
- c) Permits shallow setbacks and more density in the dimensional tables in Article IV.
- d) Prohibits a number of uses for the above reasons, and makes everything else a Special Use Permit in Articles V & VII.
- e) Allows a Planned Unit Development in the Town Center to be 2 acres instead of 5 in Article VIII.
- f) States that Design Guidelines are to be more strictly applied in the Town Center in Article IX.